Philosophers, Sufis, and Caliphs

Politics and Authority from Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad

Ali Humayun Akhtar

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Ali Humayun Akhtar is an Assistant Professor at Bates College. He is also the Robert M. Kingdon Fellow at the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Akhtar holds a PhD in History and Middle Eastern Studies from New York University.

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Introduction
Politics, Law, and Authority in the Abbasid and Fatimid Eras

What was the relationship between government and religion in Middle Eastern and North African history? In a world of caliphs, sultans, and judges, who exercised political and religious authority? This book investigates debates about leadership that involved ruling circles and scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) of jurisprudence and theology from medieval Cordoba to Cairo and Baghdad. At the heart of this story is a historical rivalry between three caliphates: the Umayyads of Cordoba, the Fatimids of Cairo, and the Abbasids of Baghdad. In a fascinating revival of late antique Hellenism, Aristotelian and Platonic notions of wisdom became a key component of how caliphs articulated their authority as political leaders. By tracing how these political debates impacted the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and their own conception of communal guidance, this book offers a new picture of two key phenomena central to world history: the interplay between ruling political authority and scholarly religious authority that distinguished the Middle East and North Africa from medieval Europe, and the enduring legacy of Aristotelian-Neoplatonic political theory, psychology, and ethics in the Middle East and North Africa prior to the European Renaissance (ca. 1300s-1600s).

The Judiciary and Islamic Intellectual Culture in the Early Centuries

The scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and their changing relationship with both the wider populace and the ruling circles of caliphs and courtiers are at the center of this book's two main questions: First, in what ways did Hellenistic thought of the late antique Middle East find a place in the politics, theology, and ethics of the Islamic period? Second, what was the relationship between models of political and religious authority in the early Islamic-era Middle East, where urban scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and not ruling circles dominated religious authority? The scholars were a broad group who overlapped with other influential figures in the cities of

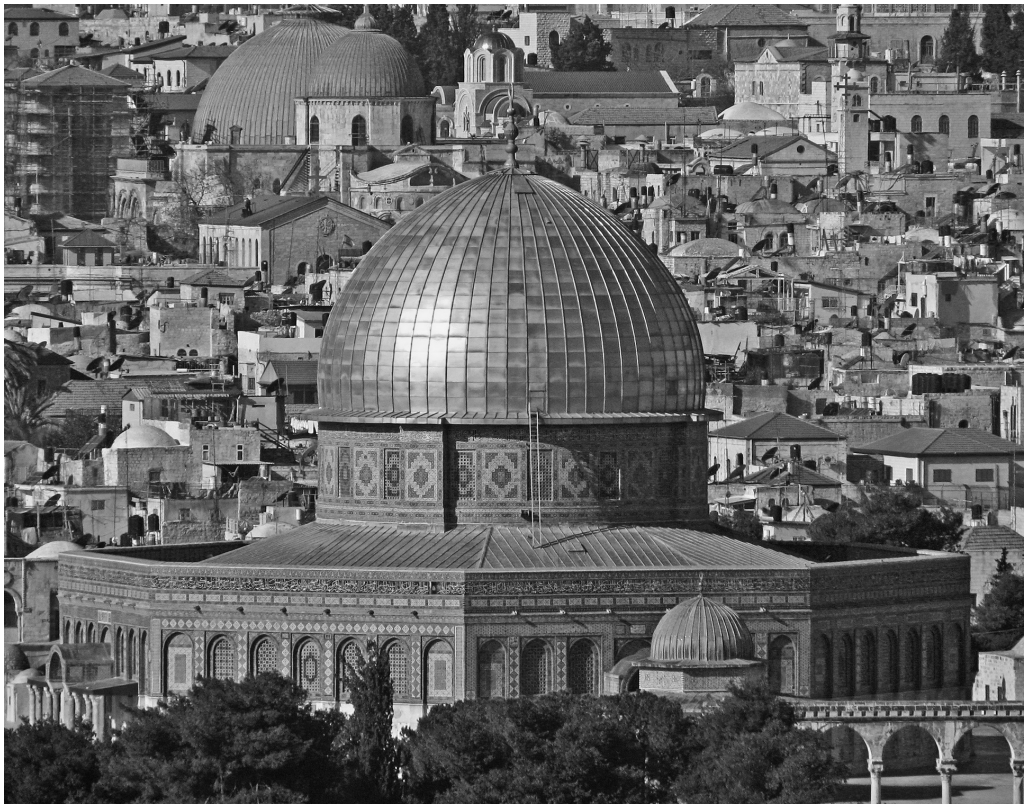

Figure I.1. Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, built in the late 600s in a design at the intersection of Eastern Roman (Byzantine), Arabian, and Islamic visual cultures.

the Middle East and North Africa. Their social influence and expertise in a growing set of scripture-related sciences – such as scriptural exegesis, *ḥadīth* science, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) including commercial law, language theory, ethics, and speculative theology (*kalām*) – meant that their legacies intertwined with those of the most famous tradespeople, astronomers, Aristotelian logicians, and saintly mystics. In the medieval or classical Islamic era prior to the arrival of the early modern Ottomans, judges Ibn Rushd (Averroes 595 A.H./1198 C.E.) in Almohad Cordoba and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) in Abbasid-Seljuk Baghdad represented examples of the more politically influential and polymathic figures within the wider urban scholarly networks.

Ibn Rushd was memorialized in Renaissance-era Europe as the Aristotelian philosopher Averroes who inspired the rise of Latin Averroism. His writings on philosophy and religion, despite emerging from an Islamic intellectual milieu, influenced the writings of the monumental Catholic philosopher and theologian San Tommaso d'Aquino

of Sicily (St. Thomas Aquinas d. 1274). In his own historical context, however, Ibn Rushd was one of the scholars of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence in Sunnī Islam, the chief judge of Almohad Cordoba, a Graeco-Arabic philosopher (*faylasūf*), a physician, and an influential scientist in the history of astronomy, physics, medicine, and mathematics.[1] al-Ghazālī, likewise remembered in Europe as the philosopher Algazel, was in his own historical context one of the scholars of the Shāfiʿī school of jurisprudence, a central figure in the introduction of Aristotelian-Avicennan modal logic in both jurisprudence and speculative theology (Ashʿarism), and notably for Part II of this book, an early philosophical mystic (Sufi metaphysician).[2] As administrative judges and polymathic scholars, both Ibn Rushd and al-Ghazālī represented a phenomenon found in both the Abbasid and the early modern Ottoman eras, in which scholars played an increasingly influential role in multiple aspects of the social, political, economic, and intellectual life of the cities of the Middle East and North Africa.

The history of scholars such as Ibn Rushd and al-Ghazālī offers a lens for investigating the elusive and changing relationship between medieval political authority and religious authority precisely because the scholars' diverse activities extended into the realms of both governing administrative circles and the general urban populace. This fluid relationship between ruling circles and scholars, and the sometimes contentious dialogues they had about communal leadership, has been studied largely in the context of the judiciary.

In the early centuries of Islamic history, particularly after the rise of the Umayyad caliphate in 661 in formerly Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Damascus, the scholars of Islam rose to a powerful leadership position in the urban societies of the Middle East. In a trend analogous to the rise of rabbis in rabbinic Judaism in the ancient Middle East, the scholars developed a reputation in the eyes of local Muslims and urban ruling circles for their expertise in the application of particular modes of knowledge, including Islamic ethics. This expertise in the ability to apply sound reasoning in scripture-related ethical, legal, and theological matters became the basis of a degree of religious authority that ultimately demarcated the changing contours of the ruling circles' own authority.[3] The scholars did not interpret the claims to a caliphate made by the Umayyad dynasty (r. 661–750 in Damascus) or the following Abbasid dynasty (r. 750–1258 in Baghdad, r. 1261–1517 in Cairo) as a claim to being the final or even primary authority on juridical and theological affairs. Rather, they recognized these caliphs as politically and religiously uniting figures in a manner that might be compared to the way Western Europeans viewed the Holy Roman Emperor, who was seen as a ruler among rulers with the

privilege of representing the political unity of the Roman Catholic world west of Greek Orthodox centers. The caliph, whose political power was counterbalanced by the power of ministers (viziers) and regional military governors (sultans, emirs), stood officially at the head of a hierarchy of these political administrators and inherited the privilege of offering an investiture of authority to local governing circles, from the emirs of Cordoba to the sultans of Persia and India.[4] There were aspects of continuity in this political framework with the first caliphate in Medina (r. 632–660). The first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī), who were among the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*) of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) and who therefore knew him personally, governed in consultation with various individuals recognized for their knowledge of legal matters and various customs, including the practices (*sunan*) of the Prophet.[5] The Prophet's wife ʿĀʾisha is notable in this regard as a major authority on these early practices. The growing body of scholars grew partly out of these early circles of learned figures, particularly those with formal knowledge of the traditions of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*). The faith of the general populace in these traditions meant that the scholars of Islam came to exercise significant religious authority during the caliphal eras of the Umayyads in Damascus, the Abbasids in Baghdad, and the Andalusī Umayyads of Cordoba. From an administrative perspective, with the expansion of the judiciary as a formal system of administrative courts oriented around the scholars' expanding jurisprudential sciences, the judiciary's institutions increasingly became a historical site of negotiation or dialogue between ruling circles and scholars about communal leadership. What made the judiciary a somewhat contested site of authority, one in which ruling political authority and scholarly religious authority were often counterbalancing forces, was the fact that individual scholars reacted to its historical development in different ways, particularly in the earliest centuries.

Most early specialists of jurisprudence within the growing body of scholars earned their livelihood from other skills, numbering among merchants, copiers of manuscripts, textile manufacturers, and tradespeople in a variety of occupations illustrative of their deep ties with local communities in the cities and towns of the Middle East and North Africa.[6] That is, the scholars' growing expertise in fields such as lexicography and Islamic ethics was not an inherently salaried pursuit. In terms of harmonizing paid careers with polymathic intellectual pursuits, the financial situation of the early scholars paralleled that of the early astronomers and philosophers. Some of the most influential figures in the history of medicine and surgery were also philosophers and astronomers, which meant that many astronomers saw patients when not

reading Aristotelian-Neoplatonic writings on the nature of the cosmos.[7] In the case of the scholars' harmonization of paid careers and intellectual pursuits, the push to professionalize the geographically wide networks of scholars as full-time paid jurists and judges in a growing administrative system of courts was partly the aspiration of centralizing ruling circles. Ruling circles may have drawn on a mix of early Islamic and pre-Islamic administrative practices in this process. As far as how scholars reacted to and participated in the administrative development of the judiciary, some scholars resisted appointments to administrative positions as judges, protective of what they perceived as the independence of their knowledge and authority.[8] Other scholars, however, were more willing to take on official judicial appointments, even in the early centuries.[9]

Significantly, even after the proliferation of administrative courts of justice and later theological colleges, which came to be funded largely by charitable endowments (*awqāf*), the scholars largely held onto their intellectual dominance in the justice system because of the epistemic authority they held at a popular level.[10] What supports this conclusion is the vast surviving body of non-binding legal opinions (*fatāwā*) from the writings of early scholars, which are illustrative of how scholars were available locally to offer a variety of answers to questions dealing with the most mundane of family matters and the mediation of neighborhood disputes.[11] The general populace's informal accessibility to the scholars, who issued these non-binding juridical opinions in their capacity as specialists of jurisprudence, continued to develop hand in hand with the scholars' more formal presence in these administrative courts as both judges and advisers to judges. Court-appointed judges, who were typically scholars themselves, often drew directly on the growing body of non-binding legal opinions that were specific to what became the most influential schools of jurisprudence in early Sunnī circles: the Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī schools of thought, and for a long period particularly in al-Andalus, the Awzāʿī and Ẓāhirī schools of thought. In some cities and periods, these judges drew directly on the opinion of a sitting juris consul (*muftī*) for a specialized legal matter.

To be sure, the scholars' role in the judiciary did not necessarily limit the rulers' ability to mete out justice directly. On the one hand, the scholars' epistemic authority in many cases dictated how even a caliph who attempted to impose an unpopular legal ruling against the wishes of the scholars risked running afoul with urban Muslim populations who looked to those scholars as ethical mediators of local disputes. On the other hand, in the historical development of the judiciary, the scholars and their opinions did not dominate all aspects of these courts given key limitations of jurisdiction in the governance of public space, security,

and order. The *maẓālim* courts and the jurisdiction of market inspectors (*muḥtasib*) in public space offer illustrative examples.

Specifically, beyond the early limitations of interference in the Christian and Jewish clergy's internal communal affairs, the Muslim scholars' religious authority in the judiciary was additionally limited or perhaps counterbalanced by a court structure known as the *maẓālim*. The *maẓālim* courts were a type of court system in which rulers and not scholars administered justice directly. The jurisdiction of a ruling figure in these courts had theoretical parallels with the way the market inspectors, who were political administrators, oversaw financial and social practices in the public marketplaces. On the one hand, the *maẓālim* courts and the role of the market inspectors illustrate the extent to which some legal jurisdictions were shaped directly by ruling circles. On the other hand, the respective roles of a ruler in the *maẓālim* courts and a market inspector became partly embedded in the way the scholars themselves theorized, or more likely accommodated retroactively, the historical role of governing circles in administering justice and maintaining security and order in a slowly expanding public sphere.[12] Notably, this scholarly theorization of the role of ruling circles in maintaining security and order occurred long before the bureaucratic nation-state made deep inroads of direct governance into a vastly expanded public sphere. In this context of the scholars' theorization of ruling governance in empire, it is notable that the scholars also identified and recognized aspects of other legal systems that already existed in the central lands of the Middle East. These legal systems include the laws and customs of the previously mentioned Christian and Jewish clergy, who held onto semiautonomous legal jurisdictions within their own Middle Eastern communities.[13] In sum, the image of these distinctions in legal systems and legal jurisdictions in the medieval Middle East, from courts with a scholarly *muftī* and the ruling *maẓālim* courts to the semi-independent legal realm of the Christian clergy, offers a picture of Muslim scholars who constituted a significant part of premodern religious authority, but whose authority and power was contested or perhaps counterbalanced within the judiciary by ruling political authority and non-Muslim religious authority.

Against the backdrop of this historical development of the judiciary and the rise of the scholars, what deserves more attention in current research is how this interplay between the rulers' political authority and the Muslim scholars' religious authority continued to develop not only inside, but also outside the judiciary's institutions. In the current study, the multifaceted realm of Islamic intellectual culture, and specifically written debates on philosophy and theology, is of particular concern.[14] Alongside the vast corpus of surviving writings on jurisprudence,

legal theory, language theory, ethics, and other fields in the expanding scholarly sciences, the scholars' writings on philosophy and theology have also survived. These latter works offer overlooked evidence of the way models of ruling political leadership and scholarly religious leadership developed in tandem within a larger dialogue over the intellectual underpinnings of communal guidance. By the tenth century, distinct trends in Graeco-Arabic philosophical doctrines were becoming an increasingly common and openly acknowledged part of how ruling circles and scholars debated and articulated conceptions of sound knowledge, communal guidance, and leadership. One controversial example of an influential political model that drew on Graeco-Arabic theories of cosmology is the tenth-century Fatimid caliphate, which was founded by political reformers within a subgroup of Ismāʿīlī Shiism. As discussed in the next section of this introduction, by the time the Fatimids founded Cairo in the late tenth century on the site of Fusṭāṭ, Fatimid ruling circles had begun to project to their neighbors in Abbasid Baghdad and Cordoba a unique representation of the Ismāʿīlī Shiite caliph as a semi-messianic (*mahdī*) Platonizing guide to salvation. The Fatimids thus challenged not only the ruling political authority of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, but also the scholarly religious authority of the networks of predominantly Sunnī scholars and rising Imāmī (Twelver) Shiite scholars.

The Fatimid Ismāʿīlī theologians' embrace of Graeco-Arabic cosmological doctrines in their conceptions of communal guidance was not an isolated phenomenon. In the same early centuries of the Islamic-era Middle East, although the Sunnī scholars rejected the Fatimid caliphate's Platonizing conception of political and religious leadership, the scholars had already been in the process of expanding their sciences and conceptions of scholarly religious authority in ways that engaged the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic theories of the Graeco-Arabic philosophers. Specifically, many scholars of the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* who studied sciences such as lexicography were also interested in the theological value of Graeco-Arabic philosophy's analysis in logical reasoning, doctrines in psychology on the soul and the intellect, and theories of cosmology about the underlying elements of the world and the agency of God in it. That is, from Cordoba to Baghdad, the early Sunnī scholars were part of an intersection of diverse intellectual networks that included, most notably for this book, the following: dedicated *ḥadīth* specialists among the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), writers of Arabic-language commentaries on Aristotle (*Arisṭūṭālīs*) and Plato (*Aflāṭūn*) among the Baghdad Peripatetics (*mashshāʾiyyūn*), and writers of a specifically Islamic metaphysics among the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) interested in both *ḥadīth* and Graeco-Arabic philosophy, each group intermingling with the next and influencing each

other's works. In the case of the Cordovan scholars Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, their writings illustrate how the polymathic learning of a scholar who studied *ḥadīth* in the tenth and eleventh centuries often included an education in Aristotelian-Neoplatonic doctrines related to scriptural topics, from discussions of human intellect and sense perception to the underlying mechanisms of causality. That is, the example of early Sunnī scholars interested in philosophy shows that in addition to studying scriptural texts, jurisprudence, ethics, and other expanding Islamic sciences, a scholar in early Sunnism might also engage the tools of Aristotelian logical reasoning or Neoplatonic conceptions of the soul and intellect in order to investigate more deeply the various scriptural references to the world's natural phenomena, the afterlife, and what lies beyond the visible realm both within and beyond the human mind.

With a focus on these changing modes of knowledge and authority that were part of both ruling and scholarly conceptions of communal leadership, the heart of this book offers an investigation of the following two-part hypothesis: First, in the multi-religious, scripture-valuing urban societies of the medieval Middle East and North Africa, where Graeco-Arabic philosophical doctrines were in various levels of circulation among the general populace of urban Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities, debates within ruling circles and scholarly networks about sound leadership of the growing Muslim populace played out not only in a negotiation over the expanding judiciary, but also in a theological dialogue about Graeco-Arabic psychological and cosmological doctrines that had widely recognized implications for conceptions of personal virtue and communal ethics. Second, the joint participation of ruling circles and the scholars in this dialogue, which occurred through both oral and textual mechanisms such as the patronage of books, was an intertwined and contested activity illustrative of how the ruling political leadership and scholarly religious leadership shaped each other's historical development in a dialectic of authority that constituted neither a ruling political orthodoxy nor a scholarly clerical orthodoxy. The parallel rise of philosopher-governors among the caliphs together with philosophical theologians and philosophical Sufis among the scholars offers a window into this interaction of political and religious leadership.

Given this overview of the judiciary as a site of the rulers' and scholars' dialogue over leadership, and against the backdrop of an Islamic intellectual culture that was an additional site of ruling and scholarly debates about leadership, the remainder of this historical introduction will turn more closely to the following questions: Why did specific Graeco-Arabic doctrines in logical reasoning, psychology, and cosmology become part

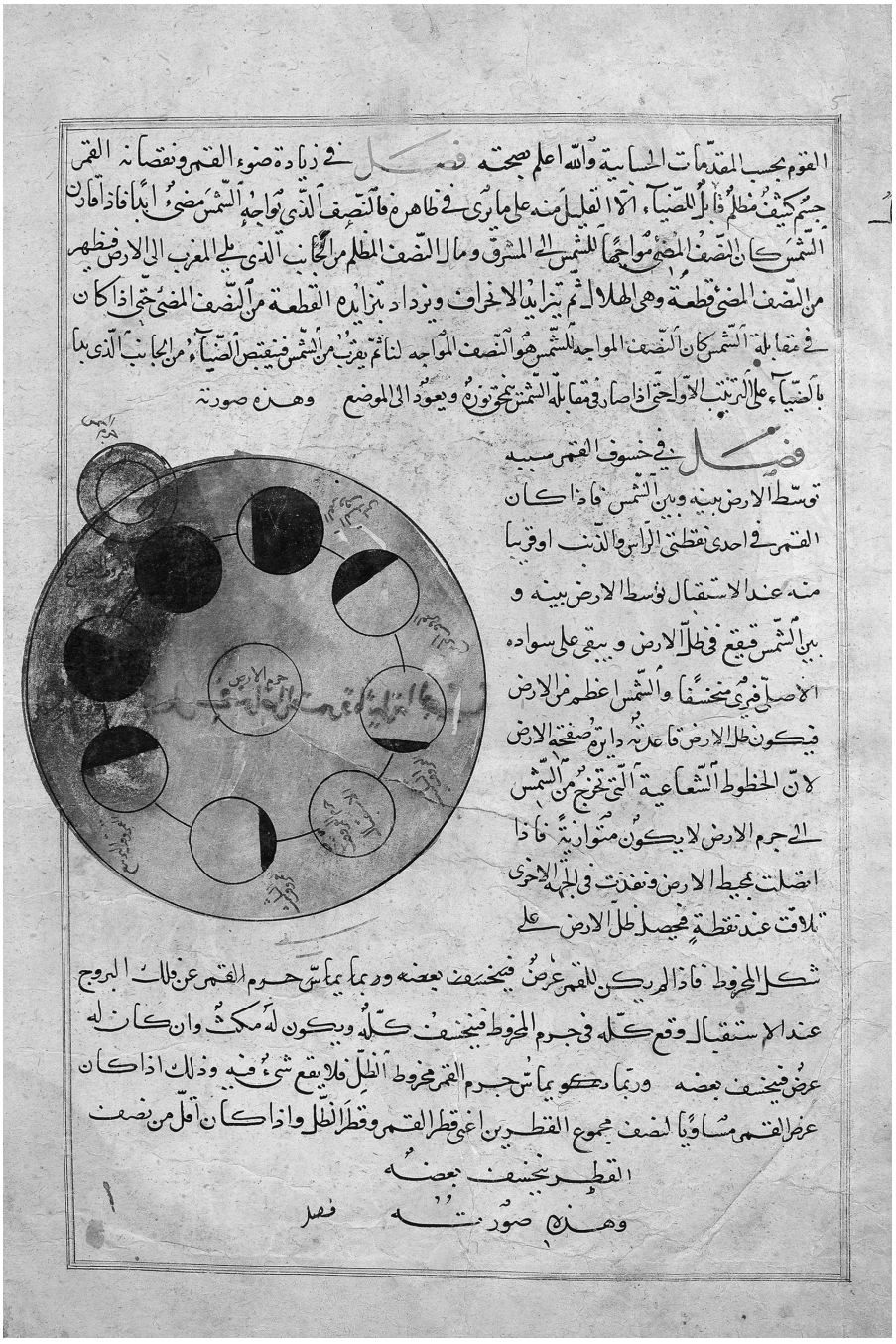

Figure I.2. Phases of the moon analyzed in a fourteenth-century Arabic manuscript.

of the ways that early Abbasid-era Sunnī-majority scholars and Muslim ruling circles articulated theories about the authority to guide and lead the early community? A key point that runs through the rest of this introduction is that among Abbasid-era rulers and scholars, conceptions of

sound knowledge and leadership engaged not only sacred text, but also the enduring legacy of late antique Hellenistic cosmology, which permeated the popular material and visual culture of the early Islamic-era Middle East.

The Scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and the Graeco-Arabic Philosophers

The scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) were analyzed in the previous section as an urban social network with influential scripture-related knowledge in sciences such as jurisprudence, legal theory, language theory, and ethics. Coinciding with the bibliophile Abbasid caliphs' support for the translation of Hellenistic philosophy and science in Baghdad, and in a move reminiscent of the Middle East's late antique Christian clergy and Jewish rabbis' activities, some of the Muslim scholars began to engage Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophy in its Graeco-Arabic form when debating two questions: What did it mean to be one of the Muslim scholars, and what modes of knowledge were relevant and sound when providing spiritual and theological guidance to the faithful Muslim populace? In the eyes of large swaths of early scholars in Sunnism, it was not inherently problematic to draw on the curriculum of late antique Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophy and science in the investigation of scripture-oriented theological questions about the cosmos, God's agency in that cosmos, and the mechanisms of the human intellect and soul as referenced in scripture. The study of particular sciences in the Graeco-Arabic philosophical curriculum was of particular interest to early scholars because it included not only the widely practiced medical sciences, but also natural sciences such as astronomy, which had perhaps the clearest religious significance both for ritual and theological matters. From the perspective of ritual, the nature of the daily prayer and the fasting month of Ramadan encouraged a precise awareness of solar patterns, lunar movement, and geographical direction. From the perspective of scriptural exegesis and theology, astronomy offered the possibility of exploring further the omnipresent astronomical references found throughout the Qur'an that described the nature of the cosmos and the agency of God in it. These questions were at the heart of the early Muʿtazilī and Ashʿarī speculative theologians' (*mutakallimūn*) investigations of the nature and underlying elements of the created cosmos as experienced by mankind and as described in scripture.[15] The fact that scholars of *ḥadīth* began to participate in these discussions, and the fact that both *ḥadīth* scholars and specialists in speculative theology began to engage the writings of the Baghdad Peripatetics, meant that for many scholars, aspects of the

late antique Aristotelian-Neoplatonic curriculum of philosophy were key to what it meant to be one of the scholars of Islam by the tenth and eleventh centuries.[16] To be sure, these developments were debated internally among the scholars, and Chapters 1 and 2 highlight how these debates even erupted politically in the tenth century. However, by the time the Timurids and Ottomans rose to power at the end of the European medieval era, the scholars of Islam had come to incorporate into the Islamic sciences a wide variety of disciplines transmitted in Arabic and Persian from the late antique philosophical curriculum. In what illustrates the longevity of these developments, fourteenth-century scholar Niẓām al-Dīn al-Nīsabūrī even declared the study of astronomy morally recommended (*mandūb*) as a kind of religious virtue, while the most influential jurisprudential college in fifteenth-century Timurid Samarkand incorporated an observatory to enrich the Islamic sciences' curriculum.[17]

In an additional avenue for an early scholarly bridge between Graeco-Arabic philosophy and Islamic theological writing, the early philosophers among the Baghdad Peripatetics also described the ancient philosophical tradition as one with roots in the wisdom of prophetic figures such as Luqmān and Idrīs, the latter whom some early philosophers identified with the ancient sage Hermes.[18] The identification of Hermes with the prophet Idrīs became commonplace by the ninth century in what further contextualizes the various angles of early scholarly interest in Graeco-Arabic philosophy. In late antique Hellenistic philosophical writing, Hermes appears to have been a marginal figure in contrast with the towering legacies of philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. However, early Graeco-Arabic philosophers emphasized the description of Hermes as having achieved an intellectual ascent to the higher world, a goal that was of paramount importance to mystical piety in early Islamic mysticism. In the lens of Aristotelian-Neoplatonic and specifically Plotinian cosmology and psychology, which was central to the writings of the Baghdad Peripatetics, Hermes' intellectual ascent was understood as the ascent of the human soul toward a greater Universal Soul, of which the Neoplatonic human soul was a part. Plotinus (d. 270), who was born in Graeco-Roman Egypt and who was one of the most influential Platonic philosophers after Plato and Aristotle, understood the human intellect and soul to be connected to a greater Universal Intellect and Universal Soul that were spaceless and outside of time. In late antique Plotinian psychology and cosmology, the underlying principles of the cosmos included One, Intellect, and Soul. al-Fārābī interpreted this cosmology according to Ptolemaic astronomy in a revised theory on the celestial emanation of these principles through the world's ensouled cognizant spinning planets, identified by some

Graeco-Arabic philosophers as planets with angels.[19] This emanation, according to Neoplatonic cosmology, proceeds logically down to the sublunary world of man. From this perspective, Hermes's intellectual ascent was the human soul's rediscovery of this primordial spiritual realm. The early philosophical emphasis on Hermes as having achieved an intellectual ascent to the higher world encouraged the claim among some particularly influential early Graeco-Arabic philosophers that the ancient Hermes, identified increasingly with the prophet Idrīs, was the most accomplished of the ancient sages. This picture of Hermes-Idrīs was one of the various links that bridged Graeco-Arabic philosophical writing with both theological and mystical writing among the early scholars of Islam. Two influential figures in transmitting this early understanding of Hermes-Idrīs more widely are of particular significance, as their legacies illustrate the process through which the intersection of Graeco-Arabic philosophy and theological writing became more widespread. The first is the philosophical Sufi Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī (d. ca. 1190–2), and the second is the group of early anonymous writers of the highly influential and widely circulated *Epistles of the Pure Brethren.*[20]

The first figure, Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, was the founder of a school of Sufi metaphysics that brought together philosophically oriented theological writing with theories on mystical experience. His school of thought, known as Illuminationism (*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*), offered a Neoplatonic (Neoplatonic-Avicennan) critique of aspects of Aristotelian (Aristotelian-Avicennan) formal and material logic.[21] al-Suhrawardī's legacy represents the culmination of a process, highlighted in Part II of this book, in which scholars who were interested in Islamic mysticism increasingly and deliberately drew on Neoplatonic-Avicennan philosophical doctrines and, in some cases, represented figures like Hermes, Plato, and the ancient Hellenistic philosophers as pre-Islamic proto-Sufi figures.[22] The second group, the Brethren of Purity, was an anonymous philosophical coterie in early Abbasid Iraq who wrote and transmitted the *Epistles of the Pure Brethren*. The *Epistles* were a set of popularly circulated philosophical works that were influential in the development of Platonizing theological writing in both Sunnism and Shiism, particularly among Sunnī mystics and Ismāʿīli Shiite theologians. The wide scholarly and popular appeal of the *Epistles of the Pure Brethren* is well documented in early Islamic history, and while later Ismāʿīlī theologians took a particular interest in their writings and actively adopted their legacy, the Brethren's original theological affiliation remains uncertain given their eclectic interests and intentional anonymity. Though some of their strongest critics were found in Sunnī scholarly circles, the writings were in fact absorbed very quickly by both early Sunnī and Ismāʿīlī Shiite theological

circles, both having picked and chosen which sections they found sound and valuable. Current research has left the question open of the Brethren of Purity's original theological affiliation in what illustrates how the *Epistles*' eclectic mix of Graeco-Arabic philosophy, Islamic theology, and mysticism in their diverse discussions of the mind and the cosmos had wide appeal in early Islamic history.[23] The legacies of al-Suhrawardī and the Pure Brethren together underline the point that in sum, from the perspective of the predominantly Sunnī scholars interested in Graeco-Arabic philosophy's relevance to their own education and conception of communal guidance, multiple avenues existed for a theological engagement with philosophical doctrines in psychology and cosmology.

By the twelfth century, against this backdrop of various links connecting Graeco-Arabic philosophy and Islamic theological writing, two intertwining trends emerged outside the realm of jurisprudence in the absorption of Graeco-Arabic philosophy into the scholarly sciences. The first was the incorporation of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic into Islamic theology's methodology, a development that paralleled the use of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic in Islamic jurisprudence. The second was the looser incorporation of conclusions in Neoplatonic-Avicennan psychology and cosmology into Islamic mystical writing, resulting in the rise of a more philosophically oriented Sufi metaphysics akin to the writings of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. What follows is a look at both scholarly trends, which became increasingly intertwined, and the enduring critique leveled by some scholars against both developments.

Scholars as Philosophical Theologians and Philosophical Sufis

From the perspective of the theological dimensions of a scholar's polymathic knowledge and guidance of the general Muslim populace, later forms of speculative theology in Sunnism after the eleventh century increasingly intersected with Graeco-Arabic philosophy in the formulation of dedicated philosophical theologies. This development was centered not only in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in Central Asia. That is, the scholars' scripture-based understanding of the mechanisms of the world, God's agency, and the process of deepening one's spirituality increasingly absorbed and reinterpreted doctrines of Graeco-Arabic philosophy in Aristotelian logical reasoning, Neoplatonic conceptions of the mind, and Neoplatonic understandings of the body and soul. In the case of what became the predominant Ashʿarī school of theology that emerged from the earlier Muʿtazilī approach, later Ashʿarism after the twelfth century became increasingly oriented around Aristotelian

(Aristotelian-Avicennan) methods of logical reasoning with additional engagement of select aspects of Neoplatonic (Neoplatonic-Avicennan) psychology and cosmology.[24] On the one hand, the picture of an increasingly philosophical dimension of scholarly theological knowledge is not the picture of scholars encouraging the general Muslim populace to draw on Aristotelian (Aristotelian-Avicennan) logical reasoning in the formulation of basic creedal beliefs. On the other hand, evidence suggests that large segments of the urban Muslim populace came to understand the scholars' original role of mediating disputes, offering guidance in ethics, and clarifying doctrinal questions, as a role increasingly connected to logic-oriented (*manṭiq*) reasoning in the tradition of Aristotle and Avicenna. What supports this picture is a combination of the following: the wide circulation of scholarly texts that include logical treatises and short creedal works with theoretically complex conclusions, the enduringly large social networks of urban scholars even after the rise of colleges, the public dimension of the later scholars' occupational activities as increasingly full-time paid professional scholars educated in publicly funded legal-theological colleges of prominence, and the text-oriented careers of much of the urban general populace.[25] The general urban populace in the medieval Middle East and North Africa included teachers, civil servants, accountants, hobbyist scientists, friends of scholars, and writers of *belle-lettres*. The most recent analyses of Middle Eastern social history and Arabic writerly culture show that the general urban populace in the ninth and tenth centuries was educated in a manner that cultivated a strong value for the practical importance of books, reading, and various forms of written and oral knowledge in an intellectual milieu from which the scholars themselves emerged.[26]

In contrast with this philosophical turn in Islamic theological writing, and against the backdrop of Middle Eastern Christian Christological debates that had grown highly philosophical in both the late antique and early Islamic eras, some Muslim scholars unsurprisingly articulated concerns about the integration of Aristotelian-Neoplatonic theories into an otherwise simple and straightforward doctrinal system oriented around the basic belief in "No God but God" Who created the cosmos. Scholars asked whether the average individual's sacred belief system might misunderstand basic theological precepts if complex theoretical discussions were taught in the context of scriptural hermeneutics, creedal belief, and spiritual reflection. Examples of these more complex theological discussions that became increasingly philosophical include theories on the relationship between divine agency (*qudra*) and divine knowledge, the connection between divine knowledge and the divine attributes (*ṣifāt*), the relationship of the attributes with the Beautiful Names (*al-asmāʾ*

al-ḥusnā), and other fine points of doctrinal belief drawing on scriptural references.[27] Among the scholars, the early critics of speculative theology in either its simpler or more philosophical forms were a diverse group. They included the *ḥadīth*-compiler Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the defender of the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic corpus and Cordovan judge Ibn Rushd (Averroes d. 595/1198), and even the later Platonizing Sufi metaphysician Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), all of whom articulated some criticism over the potential misguidance of the general populace following the proliferation of more complex and often contested theoretical approaches to theological ideas.[28] In this concern, however, these scholars moved against the prevailing tide of history that saw the Sunnī scholarly discipline of theology, particularly later Ashʿarī theology, take on more philosophical approaches to articulating doctrinal beliefs, with conclusions that were ultimately transmitted to the general populace through various intertwining channels such as al-Ghazālī's treatises. By the thirteenth century, Sunnī scholars increasingly tended toward conclusions in psychological and cosmological doctrines found in the philosophical neo-Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools of theology, which showed continuity with trends in the early and once prominent eleventh-century Andalusī Ẓāhirī school discussed in Chapter 2.[29] Ibn Ḥazm, who systematized a local Andalusī form of Ẓāhirī theological writing, formulated a pioneering epistemology in this regard. Several decades before al-Ghazālī articulated his logic-oriented nominalist critique of Neoplatonism in later Ashʿarī theology, Ibn Ḥazm called for the absorption of Aristotelian logic in Islamic theological writing to the exclusion of Neoplatonic cosmological conclusions.

Even after this widespread intersection of Graeco-Arabic philosophy and Islamic theology in Sunnism, however, the question of whether this development was epistemically sound continued to be discussed by influential scholars well into the Ottoman period. Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who lived in the last decades of the Abbasid-Mamlūk period as the Ottomans were coming to power, was famous among the later critics. Had even the most judicious philosophical theologians absorbed philosophy into Islamic thought too uncritically? Were the revised applications of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic really able to avoid Neoplatonic-Avicennan conclusions in Plotinian cosmology and psychology? Despite his admiration for aspects of philosophy's logical tools, Ibn Taymiyya's fourteenth-century position on the place of Graeco-Arabic philosophy in Islamic theology echoed significant aspects of Ibn Ḥazm's pre-Ghazālian nominalist critique of Neoplatonism discussed in Chapter 2. Ibn Taymiyya broke with Ibn Ḥazm and al-Ghazālī, however, as these earlier scholars

embraced a reformed approach to Graeco-Arabic philosophy as part of Islamic theology.[30] In systematizing this project, both Ibn Ḥazm and al-Ghazālī built on the work of some early Graeco-Arabic philosophers who already questioned a wholesale acceptance of the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic corpus into an Islamic theological worldview. al-Kindī (d. 260/873), whom al-Fārābī (d. 235/850) and Avicenna (d. 428/1037) represented as more a theologian than a true Peripatetic philosopher, offers an illustrative example. al-Kindī was influential among later philosophers such as al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992) and objected to the philosophical doctrine on the pre-eternity of the world.[31] In formulating a philosophical argument for the divine creation of the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) in time, which would break with Aristotelian-Neoplatonic doctrine and agree with scriptural cosmology's references to God's creation of the world *ex nihilo*, even al-Kindī did not need to create a philosophical solution from scratch. Christian philosophers and philosophical theologians of the late antique Middle East, who were writing in Aramaic and Arabic in the early Islamic-era Middle East, were long at work formulating philosophical positions that were in agreement with the cosmological tenets of biblical texts. For example, al-Kindī had at his disposal the logical arguments of pre-Islamic Christian philosophers such as John Philoponus, and he was likewise in conversation with contemporary Muslim speculative theologians such as the Muʿtazilīs and their early Ashʿarī successors who were already at work extracting a system of metaphysics of the world from the scriptural text.[32] Ibn Ḥazm's philosophical theology, discussed in Chapter 2, represents one example of the way al-Kindī's synthesis of Graeco-Arabic philosophy and Islamic theology anticipated or found an audience among the growing numbers of philosophically minded Muslim scholars who simultaneously studied Aristotelian logic for both jurisprudence and theology and also questioned key conclusions in Neoplatonic psychology and cosmology. Where Platonizing trends in psychology and cosmology found an additional place in scholarly writing was in the language of Sufi metaphysics, which came to intersect very strongly with Islamic theology after the twelfth century.

Sufi metaphysics, like philosophical theology, was likewise formulated and transmitted within the circles of the scholars, specifically among mystics like the Ḥanafī scholar Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. ca 380/990) and the Shāfiʿī scholar Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021).[33] Remarkably, the figure in Sunnism popularly associated with a more enduring absorption of Aristotelian (Aristotelian-Avicennan) logic into scholarly jurisprudence and theology was the same figure associated with the more widespread absorption of Sufi metaphysics into the scholarly

sciences – namely, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). In the decades and centuries following the popularization of mysticism in ninth-century Iraq, scholars who were interested in an experiential dimension of theological truths began to articulate theories of metaphysics that amounted to what might be called today a kind of mystical theology.[34] al-Ghazālī's short *Niche of the Lights* foreshadowed the extent to which works of Sufi metaphysics written by scholars were to become increasingly oriented around Neoplatonic-Avicennan conceptions of psychology and cosmology.[35] These works, whether short mystical treatises or longer volumes of metaphysics, were not oriented around the Baghdad Peripatetics' harmonizing of Aristotle with Plato, nor were they oriented around the philosophical theologians' attempt to formulate a systematic scripture-based logic-oriented representation of the world's mechanisms and God's agency. Rather, among the more primary goals of these mystical treatises and volumes was to articulate to mystical aspirants how to attain, through spiritual contemplation and ritual, a form of experiential knowledge (*maʿrifa*, *kashf*, *dhawq*) of the spiritual realm, and additionally how to articulate one's mystical experience scrupulously. Given this distinction between the Sufis' intellectual goals and those of the Baghdad Peripatetics and philosophical theologians, the interest in Graeco-Arabic philosophy among Sufi metaphysics seems, at first glance, perplexing. What makes this interest in philosophy among Sufi metaphysicians confusing is the history of Sufis criticizing the philosophers' deductive methodology and championing a more inductive and mystical epistemology, a criticism matched by the philosophers' own representation of some Sufis and theologians as pseudo-philosophers.[36]

There are two possible explanations why these Sufi metaphysicians took on an explicit interest in Neoplatonic (Neoplatonic-Avicennan) or rather Platonizing conceptions of the mind, body, soul, and universe to an extent that employed select aspects of Neoplatonic language and imagery. First, these Sufis interested in Neoplatonic-Avicennan conceptions of the mind, such as al-Ghazālī himself, often numbered among the same scholars who were writing works of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic-oriented philosophical theology. Second, as mentioned, Sufis made their own claim on Hellenistic philosophy through an alternative genealogy in which the Sufis and not the Peripatetic philosophers inherited the knowledge of ancient philosophers like Socrates and Hermes, or rather Hermes-Idrīs.[37] The previously mentioned founder of Illuminationism, Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī (d. ca. 1190–2), provides an illustrative example of a Sufi whose mystical metaphysics offered a Neoplatonic-Avicennan critique of aspects of formal and material Aristotelian-Avicennan logic.[38] In the case of philosophically

oriented Sufis like him, who increasingly emerged from the circles of the scholars, they often identified their Sufi metaphysics neither as the scholarly discipline of "speculative theology" nor the contemporary study of Graeco-Arabic "philosophy" (*falsafa*), but rather "wisdom" (*ḥikma*). In what makes the exact meaning of the term *ḥikma* dependent on time and place, philosophers like al-Fārābī (d. 235/850), Ibn Sīna (d. 428/1037), and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) used the term "wisdom" (*ḥikma*) interchangeably with the term "philosophy" (*falsafa*) of the Peripatetic (*mashshāʾī*) Aristotelian-Neoplatonic commentary tradition.[39] For many Sufis, the term *ḥikma* became synonymous with Sufi metaphysics, with pre-Islamic philosophers such as Empedocles represented in later Sufi texts as influences on early mystics like Dhū l-Nūn al-Misrī (d. 245/859) and his student Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 238/896).[40] As seen in Chapter 4, for example, the scholar and Sufi Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141) of Seville represented *ḥikma* as his own mystical approach to cosmological conclusions attained erroneously by the philosophers. Ibn Barrajān's use of *ḥikma* in this way very closely anticipated Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) critical assessment of Ibn Rushd's (Averroes d. 595/1198) deductive methodology and likewise echoed the writings of his Cordovan predecessor Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931). As discussed in Chapter 1, Ibn Masarra claimed the philosophers (*falāsifa*) arrived successfully at key theological truths when discussing the Universal Intellect and Soul while simultaneously criticizing the philosophers' use of imprecise language.

Despite the fact that Sufi metaphysics developed among mystics within scholarly circles, some scholars offered enduring critiques of the mystics and Sufi metaphysics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Significantly, these criticisms were often less centrally oriented around their approach to philosophical doctrines and more oriented around their use of esoteric scriptural hermeneutics. Scholars pointed to the potential dangers of how the mystics, much like the Ismāʿīlīs, integrated interpretations of theological beliefs and ritual in an "interior" (*bāṭin*) category of scriptural meaning that in some cases departed significantly from the corresponding "exterior" (*ẓāhir*) level of meaning.[41] Though mystics pointed to the parallel importance of these interior and exterior meanings, critics highlighted controversial cases where "interior" meanings appeared to compromise traditional creedal doctrines and ritual obligations. The resulting controversy was the Islamic version of an antinomianism (*ibāḥiyya*) debate, which saw some critics misrepresent mystical approaches to esoteric scriptural hermeneutics.[42] From the critics' perspective, the discovery of deeper meanings of theological belief and ritual was not itself problematic, as it was commonplace in Qur'an commentary. Where criticism emerged was in cases when the

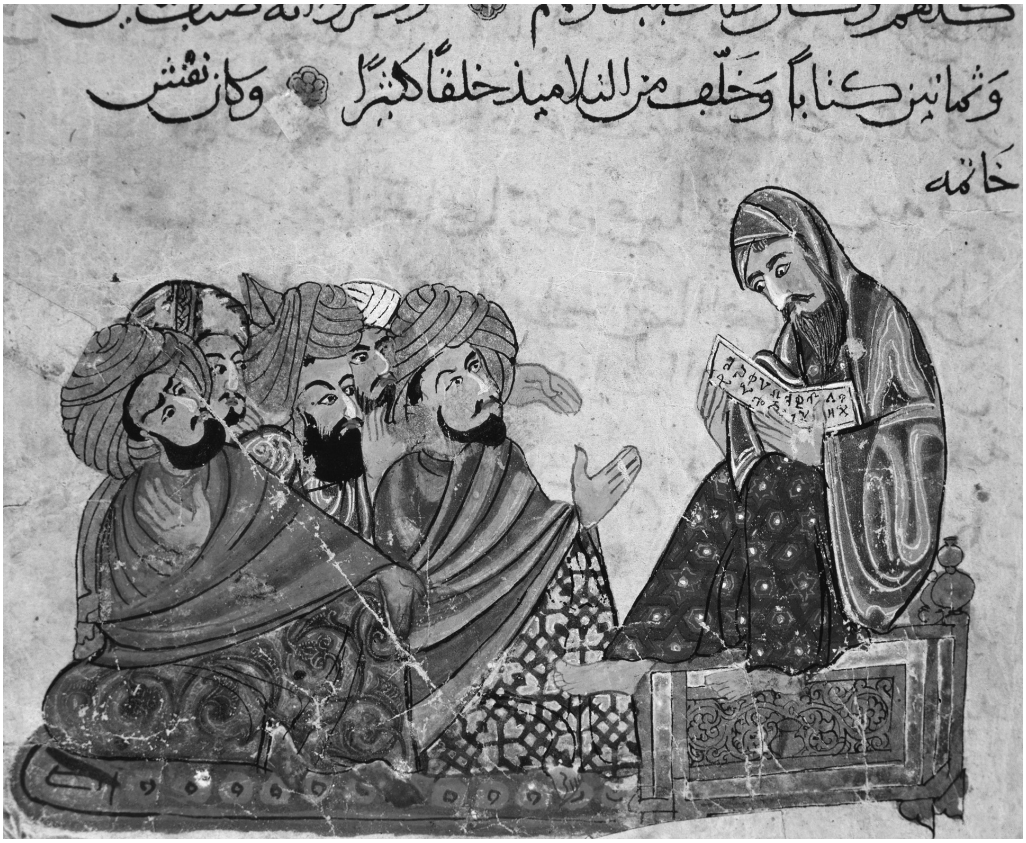

Figure I.3. Socrates (Sūqrāṭ) discussing philosophy with students, as represented in a thirteenth-century Arabic miniature.

distinction between "interior" meanings and "exterior" meanings was so great that the resulting dichotomy resembled the esoteric hermeneutics of the Ismāʿīlī Shiite theologians. That is, Sufi metaphysics, despite being systematized within Sunnī scholarly circles, had become entangled in the writings of critics with the controversy over Ismāʿīlī theology because of a shared history of interest in esoteric scriptural hermeneutics. In what brings the political dimensions of this controversy into clearer focus, esoteric scriptural hermeneutics formed the basis of the Fatimid Ismāʿīlī movement's claim to the caliphate in tenth-century North Africa, which explains the rise of the epithet "esotericists" (*bāṭiniyya*) to describe the Fatimid caliphate and the Ismāʿīlīs more broadly. By the fourteenth century, the scholar Ibn Taymiyya applied the Ismāʿīlī epithet "esotericists" to both the philosophers and the Sufis in a critique that included special criticism of al-Ghazālī, whom medieval and modern historians identify as a key figure in the rise among the scholars of philosophical theology and philosophically oriented Sufi metaphysics. Ironically, al-Ghazālī

was the author of the *Scandals of the Esotericists*, a work written under political patronage that praised the Abbasid caliphate and criticized the rivaling Fatimid caliphate. That this work included its own criticism of the Fatimid caliphate's political use of Graeco-Arabic philosophy, and that it was written under a caliphate in Baghdad that once sponsored the translation of Hellenistic works into Arabic, reflects the extent to which scholarly debates about philosophy's value in communal guidance and leadership were heavily impacted by caliphal politics.

Caliphs as Bibliophile Patrons of Philosophy and Platonizing Guides

As discussed in the last section, the intellectual milieu of the multireligious Hellenistic Middle East contextualizes the way early Sunnī scholars found a place for Graeco-Arabic philosophy in conceptions of their own knowledge and role as communal guides. From the perspective of politics and its impact on religion, this development was also a function of the rise of caliphal courts in Damascus and Cairo that financially supported the translation and transmission of Graeco-Arabic philosophy and science.[43] The rise of what might be called philosophical caliphs occurred especially in the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad and the rivaling Fatimid Ismāʿīlī caliphate of Cairo, even as their respective approaches contrasted significantly. The early decades of the Abbasid period (r. 750–1258 in Baghdad, r. 1261–1517 in Cairo) saw the rise of a caliph, namely al-Maʾmūn (r. 813–833), who claimed to have spoken with Aristotle in a famously recounted dream.[44] This period saw the politically backed and socially supported absorption of late antique Hellenistic thought in early Islamic intellectual and visual culture, an absorption that was part of a wider Greek-Arabic, Aramaic-Arabic, and Pahlavi-Arabic translation movement centered in Baghdad. In continuity with the pre-Islamic Sassanian monarchs who welcomed philosophers and physicians fleeing the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) empire for the Persian city of Gundishapur, the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad likewise cultivated a model of authority akin to a kind of bibliophile philosopher-governor. The rise of the Abbasids' neighbors in tenth-century Cairo, the rivaling Fatimid caliphate (r. 909–1171), also saw the absorption of Graeco-Arabic philosophy into ruling political culture, but the model of authority the Fatimids projected was a controversial one in the eyes of the predominantly Sunnī scholarly networks. In contrast with the Abbasid model, where the caliph was an administrative and imperial uniting figure, the Fatimids conceived of their caliph as a semi-messianic

(*mahdī*) Platonizing guide, complete with an elusive political lore that stirred vivid imaginations around the Islamic world for centuries.

As mentioned, the Fatimid caliphate (r. 909–1171) emerged in North Africa from a movement not in the predominantly Sunnī manifestation of Islam, but in a subset of early Shiism, specifically early Ismāʿīlism. The early history of the Ismāʿīlī movement in the ninth century is vague because of the loss of early texts, and it is largely known based on representations of its origins written both by later Ismāʿīlī theologians and by critics of Ismāʿīlism. By the formative ninth century, the other main subset of Shiism, the Imāmī (Twelver) form of Shiism dominant in present-day Iran, had already adopted a politically conciliatory position within the Sunnī political and religious establishment of the Abbasid caliphate. Twelver Shiism's political position was so conciliatory in recognizing the Sunnī Abbasid caliphate that the reigning "protectorate" dynasty of military emirs in Abbasid Baghdad who ruled coterminously with the caliph was an Imāmī Shiite military dynasty – namely, the Būyid or Buwayhid emirs (r. 945–1055).[45] While the successor Seljuk sultans of Baghdad (r. 1055–1258) represented themselves as restorers of Sunnī authority within the Abbasid caliphate during the sultanate of Toghril (r. 1040–1063), the Būyids' earlier military reign throughout Iraq and Iran had already been partially accommodated in political theory by the Sunnī scholarly establishment of Iraq.[46] The arrangement of a reigning emir or sultan in Baghdad who ruled concomitantly with a caliph in Baghdad became embedded in the later Sunnī scholars' formally elaborated distinctions between the nature of the caliph's leadership and the sultan's or emir's leadership. These theories were articulated formally by figures such as the jurist and political theorist al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) and the polymath scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), chief judge under the coterminous rule of the Abbasid caliphs and Seljuk sultans.

What made the rise of a rival Fatimid Ismāʿīlī Shiite caliphate much more alarming to the predominantly Sunnī scholars than the rise of an Imāmī Shiite emirate in the Abbasid heartland was the fact that the Fatimids rejected the entire Abbasid imperial framework. A rejection of the Abbasid caliphate was not simply the rejection of the caliph. Because the caliph stood atop a decentralized imperial hierarchy of political authority, a rejection of the Abbasid caliph implied a rejection of the governing authority of reigning sultans and emirs from Cordoba to Baghdad, as well as a dismissal of the religious authority of the networks of influential Sunnī and Imāmī Shiite scholars who recognized the political legitimacy of the prevailing Abbasid political system. The declaration of a rival caliphate in 909 by the Fatimid Ismāʿīlīs challenged the authority of all of these groups.[47] This rejection of the legitimacy of

what amounted to the prevailing imperial commonwealth of Islam based in Baghdad had its roots in some ninth- and tenth-century Ismāʿīlī Shiite theological circles that theorized significant political change. While early Ismāʿīlī Shiite writers did not have a uniform approach or conception of what ideal models of religious and political authority looked like, some writers appear to have theorized a politically revolutionary approach that contrasted with Imāmī Shiism's more politically conciliatory approach. How the Platonizing philosophical underpinnings of this Ismāʿīlī political theology took shape is a particularly elusive story.

Ismāʿīlī theologians in the ninth century had begun to develop a reputation found in Sunnī representations of Ismāʿīlism for synthesizing Shiite theories of a coming semi-messianic leader (*mahdī*) with Graeco-Arabic doctrines in psychology related to inspired knowledge and celestial intelligence. This Platonizing representation of Ismāʿīlī theology, epitomized in al-Ghazālī's writings examined in Chapter 3, had a genuine basis in the writings of early Ismāʿīlī theologians. Specifically, some early philosophically oriented Ismāʿīlī writers active in Persia and Central Asia, including Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/942), were interested in explaining Ismāʿīlī theology and conceptions of salvation using the analysis of contemporary Neoplatonic psychology and cosmology.[48] Al-Nasafī agreed with Graeco-Arabic forms of Plotinian (Neoplatonic) cosmology. According to this cosmology, human souls were connected to a greater Universal Soul, and human intellects were likewise connected to a greater Universal Intellect, which philosophers like al-Fārābī (d. 235/850) understood to be spaceless and outside of time in agreement with Plotinus (d. 270). As previously discussed in the context of the scholars' encounter with philosophy, the late antique synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic commentary traditions found in Plotinus's legacy posited that the underlying principles of existence included One, Intellect, and Soul. Drawing it seems on the Baghdad Peripatetics who emerged from the Greek-Arabic, Aramaic-Arabic, and Pahlavi-Arabic translation movement under the early Abbasid caliphate, al-Nasafī understood the human soul to be an element that somehow linked man in the corporeal world with the Plotinian Universal Soul outside of time and space. In line with aspects of Plotinian soteriology, al-Nasafī and later Ismāʿīlī theologians such as al-Kirmānī (d. 411/1020) characterized the process of perfecting the soul as part of man's spiritual ascent toward ultimate enlightenment and eventually salvation. According to these theories, this spiritual ascent was enabled through the medium of intellect, and in a way that had implications for religious authority, Ismāʿīlī theologians came to represent Ismāʿīlī spiritual guides and teachers as facilitating this process of a philosophical intellectual ascent.

During the early reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz (r. 953–975), the Fatimids ultimately adopted, in part through the patronage of Ismāʿīlī theological books, this early ninth-century Ismāʿīlī synthesis of Neoplatonic psychology and Ismāʿīlī conceptualizations of leadership and salvation.[49] While these theories were originally formulated by figures like al-Nasafī (d. 332/942) who were not officially connected to the Fatimid movement, others like al-Kirmānī (d. 411/1020) were formally aligned with the Fatimids. Given the Abbasid-era Sunnī scholars' geographical proximity to the early philosophical Persian Ismāʿīlīs of al-Nasafī's (d. 332/942) circle, Sunnī scholars may not have had to wait for Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz (r. 953–975) to adopt these more Neoplatonic Ismāʿīlī concepts of leadership in order to develop an early stereotype of Ismāʿīlī theology as a Platonizing one. In fact, from a Sunnī scholarly perspective, the idea of ruling circles drawing on select aspects of Hellenistic thought in ruling political culture was a familiar one, even if the Fatimids' addition of semi-messianic overtones was less familiar. As mentioned, from at least as far back as the bibliophile Sunnī Abbasid caliphs such as al-Maʾmūn (r. 813–833), the caliph associated with the dream about Aristotle, Sunnī scholars from the era of the politically backed Greek-Arabic translation movement were already familiar with the idea that a ruling political administration could draw on Graeco-Arabic philosophy in the formation of political culture and articulation of political leadership. However, it was particularly the messianic dimension of the Fatimids' conception of a philosophical caliph that attracted special criticism in its representation of the caliph as claiming more religious authority than any of the previous caliphs of Baghdad, Damascus, or Medina. The Fatimid conception of the caliph was even the source of the Qarmaṭī Ismāʿīlīs' unwillingness to join the Fatimid Ismāʿīlī movement. Still, the more basic notion of the caliph as a philosopher-governor was not a new one, as it had a place in both Abbasid and Fatimid political culture despite the distinctions in approach. What is particularly significant in this concept's tandem development in Abbasid and Fatimid political culture, however, is how one came to impact the other. Specifically, the Fatimids' model of a Platonizing Ismāʿīlī caliphate seems to have had an impact on how the Abbasid caliphate revised and backpedaled its political connection with Graeco-Arabic philosophy.

While the early Abbasid caliphate in the era of Maʾmūn (r. 813–833) was originally a source of patronage of a wide spectrum of Graeco-Arabic philosophical books and ideas, a pattern that made the caliphate a bibliophile center of global knowledge, the later Abbasid caliphate in the era of al-Mustaẓhir (r. 1094–1118) moved toward sifting out problematic political and theological manifestations of Graeco-Arabic

philosophy. At the center of the Abbasid caliphate's critique, which can be located in the realm of a new set of court-commissioned books, was a disapproving representation of the Ismāʿīlīs' conception of the Ismāʿīlī caliph and his inner circles as Platonizing guides who claimed to facilitate a kind of spiritual enlightenment among the general populace. More specifically, in response to both the Fatimid Ismāʿīlīs and the breakoff Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs led by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) of the famous *Ḥashīshiyya*, the court of the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaẓhir (r. 1094–1118) commissioned chief judge al-Ghazālī to write a short theological treatise called the *Scandals of the Esotericists* that criticized Ismāʿīlī politics and theology.[50] The treatise condemned in particular the way the Ismāʿīlīs used philosophical doctrines in psychology and cosmology as the basis of a claim to communal leadership and guidance.[51] Interestingly, as Chapter 3 discusses, three of the doctrines in cosmology that al-Ghazālī criticized in Ismāʿīlī philosophical theology were the same three that he selected for special condemnation against the Graeco-Arabic philosophers in the form of a *fatwā* in the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. These doctrines were specifically the philosophical notion of the pre-eternity of the world, the nature of God's knowledge of the universals and particulars, and the nature of human resurrection in terms of body and soul.[52] The *Incoherence*, in turn, played an important role in laying out more enduring contours of Sunnī scholarly distinctions between theologically sound and unsound absorptions of Graeco-Arabic philosophical doctrines. Scholarly works like the *Scandals of the Esotericists* and the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* shaped the parallel development of an Aristotelian-Avicennan logic-oriented form of Islamic theology (later Ashʿarism) and a more loosely Platonizing form of Islamic mysticism (Sufi metaphysics), both of which became central dimensions of what it meant to be a Sunnī scholarly guide of the community after the eleventh century. One of the key arguments of Part I of this book is that earlier sets of writings in al-Andalus, especially those of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), anticipated al-Ghazālī's call for a more systematic reassessment of Aristotelian logic and Neoplatonic doctrines in psychology and cosmology in a way that similarly responded to the controversial rise of the Fatimids as a semi-messianic Platonizing political movement.

The examples of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) criticizing the Fatimids' Platonizing political theology within their respective investigations of Neoplatonic cosmology's role in the Sunnī scholarly sciences points to a key pattern illustrated in this book: Just as the Abbasid–Fatimid rivalry in political models had an impact on Abbasid conceptions of ruling political authority, it likewise had an

impact on how the predominantly Sunnī networks of scholars articulated the contours of their own scholarly knowledge and religious authority as communal guides. In particular, the Abbasid–Fatimid political rivalry helped shape a tenth- and eleventh-century scholarly conversation about which aspects of Graeco-Arabic philosophical knowledge were relevant parts of what it meant to be a theological guide of the Muslims within the general multi-religious populace. As Part I shows, the impact of this conversation on the scholars was twofold. First, Sunnī scholars cultivated a lasting place for Aristotelian logic to the exclusion of specific Neoplatonic conclusions in the most influential methodologies of Islamic theology. Second, the scholars cultivated an enduring space in Sufi metaphysics for revised interpretations of Neoplatonic doctrines in psychology and cosmology. That is, the history of the scholars embracing Aristotelian-Avicennan logic-oriented forms of philosophical theology and more loosely Platonizing forms of Sufi metaphysics in their debates about what it meant to be a Sunnī scholarly guide of the community's belief, which was discussed in the first part of this introduction, was shaped partly by the political contingencies of this Abbasid-Fatimid rivalry and its competing philosophical conceptions of political leadership. This dialectical relationship between conceptions of ruling political authority and scholarly religious authority can be located in two key textual phenomena traced in this book. First, scholarly theological debates about the contours of sound belief and ritual were often articulated in writing with an explicit awareness of how specific positions were used controversially in contemporary politics, especially in Fatimid politics. Second, the texts in which these ideas were elaborated were often entangled with ruling attempts to sponsor or alternatively marginalize specific groups of scholars and works. At the highest level of the Abbasid-Fatimid rivalry, this attempt to sponsor specific scholarly circles developed into competing patterns of patronage for the Sunnī theological-juridical colleges of Iraq and the originally Ismāʿīlī al-Azhar college of Cairo. Ironically, scholarly circles maintained a degree of intellectual independence despite this patronage, though the scholars' conception of their own role as communal guides developed in dialogue with continuing political developments.

A Fluid Dialectic of Authority between Rulers and Scholars

In sum, the historical picture of authority illustrated in this book is still the familiar image of scholarly networks constituting the core of religious authority in the medieval Middle East and North Africa, whose authority in jurisprudence was extensive yet limited by the legal jurisdiction

of political ruling circles and the communal boundaries of Jewish and Christian communities. What is new in this book's analysis is an illustration of how the knowledge and epistemology that undergirded the scholars' own communal leadership as doctrinal guides changed in response to the ideological underpinnings of various political models of leadership, which scholars debated and deemed either legitimate or illegitimate conceptions of political leadership. The trajectory of the rulers' and scholars' respective embrace of Graeco-Arabic philosophy in political culture and the scholarly sciences, and the scholars' growing distinction between the value of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic and shortcomings of Neoplatonic-Avicennan psychology and cosmology, represent one of the most significant consequences of this dialogue of authority, one that ultimately impacted Latin Europe's nominalist critique of Neoplatonism and the discussions of the Scientific Revolution.

At the center of the analysis of politics and religion in this book, in sum, is evidence in Arabic from philosophical treatises, works of heresiography, bio-bibliographical dictionaries, court chronicles, and mystical exegesis that have rarely been seen by Western audiences. The Arabic manuscripts from the archival libraries of present-day Turkey in particular have not been widely read even in the original Arabic, as the manuscripts have only recently begun to be edited after centuries of remaining in Ottoman libraries alongside a variety of unpublished Andalusian manuscripts. These manuscripts arrived in Anatolia with the slow exodus of both Muslim and Jewish Andalusī intellectual circles before the transfer of the last Andalusī domain, Nasrid Granada, to the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in 1492. Drawing on this evidence, this book begins with an analysis of how the rise of the Fatimid caliphate, which rivaled the Andalusī Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba and the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, brought about a complex negotiation over religious leadership and political power in the tenth-century Middle East and North Africa.

Notes

1 In contrast with the predominantly philosophical legacies of Averroes and al-Ghazālī during the Latin-Arabic translation movement in Catholic Toledo, Ibn Rushd's juridical legacy as a judge and legal theorist loomed large in his own historical context of Almohad-era al-Andalus. At the same time, there were parallels in the political culture of patronage that fostered philosophical writing between the Almohad era of al-Andalus and the coterminous Castilian and Nasrid eras that followed. The respective works of Richard Taylor and Maribel Fierro have highlighted the multiple historical contexts in which the legacy of Averroes and the Andalusī philosophers developed. Richard Taylor, "Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Acquinas's Conception of the Beatific Vision in IV Sent. D. 4 49, Q. 2. A. 1," *The Thomist* 76 (2012): 509–50; idem,

"Ibn Rushd/Averroes and 'Islamic' Rationalism," in *Medieval Encounters. Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue* 15 (2009): 125–35. Maribel Fierro, "The Legal Policies of the Almohad Caliphs and Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 10 (1999): 226–48; idem, "Alfonso the Wise: The Last Almohad Caliph?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 175–98. A picture of the political, religious, and intellectual context of the transmission of Graeco-Arabic philosophy into Latin in centers such as Toledo can be seen in Charles Burnett's study of Iohannes Hispanus. An Arabic-Latin translator and dean at the cathedral of Toledo in the late twelfth century, Hispanus came most likely from an originally Andalusī Christian (Mozarab) family. Charles Burnett, "Magister Iohannes Hispanus: Towards the Identity of a Toledan Translator," in *Comprendre et maîtriser la nature au Moyen Age. Mélanges d'histoire des sciences offerts à Guy Beaujouan* (Geneva/Paris: Librairie Droz/Librairie Champion, 1994), pp. 425–36.

2 As in the case of Ibn Rushd's career as chief judge under the Almohads in Cordoba, al-Ghazālī's career as chief judge under the Abbasid caliphs and Seljuk sultans in Baghdad was similarly illustrative of a historical context distinct from the politics of Europe that shaped the Latin reception of al-Ghazālī's philosophical writings. Kenneth Garden's analysis of this political context in Baghdad offers a valuable starting point for considering this comparison. Kenneth Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 17–29.

3 Various studies on the history of scholars' religious authority and its relationship with ruling political authority offer a useful starting point for understanding the connections between politics and religion in the medieval Middle East more broadly. Ira M. Lapidus, "The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (1975): 363–85; Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 111–76; Michael Cook, "Activism and Quietism in Islam: The Case of the Early Murjiʾa," in *Islam and Power*, eds. Alexander S. Cudsi and Ali E. H. Dessouki (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 15–23. Christopher Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, AH 232–295/AD 847–908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1996): 316–42.

4 The public dimension of this caliphal role can be identified in the shared coinage of the various regions of the caliphate and in the Friday sermon that mentioned the caliph's name. Hugh Kennedy offers a picture of the early Abbasid caliphate in terms of a "commonwealth" linked by these political elements. A particularly useful overview can be found in "The Structure of Politics in the Muslim Commonwealth," in Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the 6th to the 11th Century* (London: Longman, 1986), pp. 200–11.

5 For an overview of the rise of scholars and the judiciary, including the role of scholars as both local mediators and administrative judges, see "The Formative Period," in Wael Hallaq, *Sharīʿa: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 27–72. See also Jonathan Brockopp, "The Formation of Islamic Law: The Egyptian School, 750–900," Annales Islamologiques 45 (2011): 123–140.

6 The case of Abū Ḥanīfa as a manufacturer of a type of silk fabric (*khazz*) is illustrative of this phenomenon. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Abū Ḥanīfa" (by Hiroyuki Yanagihashi).

7 One medieval account on al-Andalus represents figures prior to the eleventh century who were interested in Graeco-Arabic philosophy as having numbered largely among the physicians of their time. Josef Puig Montada, "Philosophy in Andalusia: Ibn Bājja and Ibn Ṭufayl," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 155ff. The case of the Christian philosopher-physician and logician Sergius of Reshʿaynā (d. 536) in the pre-Islamic Middle East highlights the continuity of this late antique framework in the early centuries of Islam.

8 Studies by Christopher Melcher and Wael Hallaq help illustrate this point. Melchert has offered an illustrative picture of how the rise of scholarly schools of thought in jurisprudence constituted an intellectual development that depended less on political patronage and more on the transmission of scholarly sciences from teachers to students. Still, Melchert highlights how the history of political patronage may help explain the disappearance of the originally prominent Ẓāhirī school of jurisprudence, which continues to be studied in modern scholarly circles. In a similar context, Hallaq has pointed out that in much of early Islamic history, the scholars did not see the attainment of an official judgeship as a necessary part of a successful legal career. Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunnī Schools of Law* (Brill: Leiden, 1997). Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 168–89.

9 Muhammad Qasim Zaman's discussion of scholars who were more willing to take those positions in particular periods can be compared with Hallaq's analysis in note 8. Their respective findings point, ultimately, to a diversity of medieval scholarly opinions about judgeship appointments in different times and places. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Caliphs, the *ʿUlamāʾ*, and the Law: Defining the Role and Function of the Caliph in the Early ʿAbbāsid Period," *Islamic Law and Society* 4 (1997): 1–36.

10 This widespread religious authority of the scholars can be contextualized alongside the rise of intellectual, social, and commercial networks that connected scholars and scholarly families from Iberia to Central and South Asia. Several studies offer a picture of the scholars as constituting much of premodern Islamic religious authority precisely because of the lasting intellectual or epistemic authority they commanded even after they began to take on administrative positions. Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1135* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 69–90, 111–76; Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law*, pp. 168–74; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 119–66.

11 Devin Stewart has offered an analysis of the authority to issue these opinions in later centuries. Devin Stewart, "The Doctorate of Islamic Law in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria," in *Law and Education in Medieval Islam Studies in Memory of Professor George Makdisi*, eds. Joseph. Lowry, Devin J. Stewart, and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Cambridge: The E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004), pp. 45–90. For the early centuries, see "Law and Society" in Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, pp. 159–96. Joseph Lowry's analysis of al-Shāfiʿī's ninth-century

work on legal theory offers a window into the toolbox scholars developed in the early centuries for the formation and articulation of these opinions. Joseph E. Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory: The Risāla of Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs Al-Shāfiʿī* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

12 A succinct picture of these *maẓālim* courts and their place in Islamic legal theory, with particular focus on the story of the scholars' historical accommodation of the rulers' judicial authority, can be found in the following: Linda T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 79–80. The reference to the modern expansion of public spaces here draws on the contrast, highlighted in a variety of works, between the public sphere in the modern and premodern Middle East. The mosque and the marketplace are examples of public spaces in the medieval era where it was within the legal jurisdiction of figures such as market inspectors to regulate defined ethical boundaries of social behavior and financial exchange. There were also semi-public spaces such as graveyards where the market inspectors' jurisdiction to regulate social behavior, such as mourning practices, was more complex. These public and semi-public spaces contrast with the large swaths of what might be thought of as semi-private spaces in these medieval cities, including the often discussed domestic courtyards and alleyways that led to the market streets. In practice, the boundaries of public, semi-public, private, and semi-private spaces in premodern cities has been as much a topic of debate among modern reformers of the public sphere as it is currently a topic of debate among historians seeking to revise the twentieth-century historiography of the often over-generalized "medieval Islamic city." For an overview of this twentieth-century historiography and for some examples of recent reconceptualizations of this history, see Masashi Haneda and Tōru Miura (eds.), *Islamic Urban Studies: Historical Review and Perspectives* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994). On the market inspectors, see Roy Mottahedeh and Kristen Stilt, "Public and Private as Viewed Through the Work of the *Muḥtasib*," *Social Research* 70 (2003): 735–48; Yaron Klein, "Between Public and Private: An Examination of *ḥisba* Literature," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 7 (2006): 41–62.

13 The continued prominence of originally late antique Christian and Jewish clerical and semi-clerical figures within early Islamic-era Christian and Jewish communities was due partly to historical distinctions in legal status and legal jurisdiction according to membership in one of the many semiautonomous religious communities of these cities. This legal framework, which echoed aspects of pre-Islamic Sassanian Iranian administration and the political administration of Medina during the lifetime of the Prophet, had a notably enduring legacy in the later Ottoman history of legal dualism and legal pluralism. During the rise of late Ottoman nationalism in nineteenth-century Istanbul and other eastern Mediterranean Ottoman cities, in the decades leading up to the fragmentation of the empire, a later form of this legal pluralism became entangled with debates about extraterritoriality. Dating back especially to the medieval era of trade with the Venetian empire, non-Muslim communities, particularly merchants and diplomats, had attained legal exceptions and legal privileges as go-betweens connecting Ottoman lands

with European powers. Michelle Campos has highlighted how in the modern period, with the growth of local resident communities with foreign citizenship, the existence of multiple legal statuses formed part of the centrifugal forces that clashed with the centripetal aspirations of Ottoman nationalism. Paradoxically, Ottoman nationalism was the project of some of the very same Muslim, Christian, and Jewish figures who were part of what had become a transnational and legally dualistic, or perhaps fragmented, civic framework. Michelle Campos, *Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Late Ottoman Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

14 Shawkat Toorawa's analysis of Arabic writerly culture in the Abbasid era traces early developments in the production and circulation of a vast body of medieval Arabic texts. The wide circulation of these writings contextualizes one key point illustrated in the current study: Debates among scholars assessing theories of knowledge and defining the custodians of that knowledge were written and transmitted in an urban context in which textual concepts had wide readership and where textual ideas were transmitted in both written and oral forms. Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp. 1–24.

15 Richard Frank's analysis of the beginnings of speculative theology remains a key starting point for an investigation of how early speculative theologians were active at the elusive intersection of early scholarly circles and the world of early Graeco-Arabic philosophers in Iraq. Richard Frank, *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abû l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllâf: A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalâm* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1966).

16 Christopher Melchert and Ahmet Karamustafa have each examined some of the contours of this debate among early *ḥadīth* scholars about the soundness of speculative theology. In the case of early mystics among the scholars, this debate was additionally entangled with sound approaches to articulating mystical thought. Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law* (Brill: Leiden, 1997), pp. 68–86. Ahmed Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 83–113.

17 An illustrative example of the inclusion of astronomy as part of the educational curriculum of Islamic scholars is found in Robert Morrison's analysis of Niẓām al-Dīn al-Nīsabūrī's fourteenth-century writings, which include views on *falsafa* more broadly. Robert G. Morrison, *Islam and Science: The Intellectual Career of Nīẓām Al-Dīn Al-Nīsābūrī* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 20–36.

18 On this early debate about the identification of Hermes with Idrīs, and the representation of Hermes as a philosopher and mystic, see Kevin Thomas van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 166–8.

19 David Reisman offers a succinct overview and analysis of al-Fārābī's thought. David Reisman, "al-Fārābī and the Philosophical Curriculum," *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 52–71.

20 Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, pp. 222–6.
21 For two brief overviews on his thought, see John Walbridge, "Suhrawardī and Illuminationism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 201–23. Hossein Ziai, "The Illuminationist Tradition," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 465–96.
22 Among these later Sufis, particularly after the eras of al-Suhrawardī and Ibn ʿArabī, the representation of Socrates and Plato as proto-Sufi figures loomed increasingly large. One example of this kind of representation is found in the chief minister Ibn al-Khaṭīb's politically commissioned work on Sufism, *Rawḍat al-Taʿrīf bi-l-Ḥubb al-Sharīf*. Ali Humayun Akhtar, "The Political Controversy over Graeco-Arabic Philosophy and Sufism in Nasrid Government: The Case of Ibn al-Khaṭīb in al-Andalus," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47 (2015): 323–42.
23 Abbas Hamdani summarized the state of early research on the texts in a quote that remains illustrative of the inherently multidisciplinary and eclectic nature of the writings: "Having taken their stand on the date of composition of the *Rasāʾil*, scholars have argued whether its authors were Sunnis or Shiis; if Sunnis, whether they were Mutʿazilī or Sufi; if Shiis, whether they were Zaydī, Ithnā-ʿAsharī, Fatimid or Qarmatian." Abbas Hamdani, "The Arrangement of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* and the Problem of Interpolations," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984): 97–110. See also Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in al-Andalus: Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), author of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* and the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm (Picatrix)*," *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 87–112.
24 Studies by Robert Wisnovsky and Yahya Michot offer useful starting points for examining the Avicennan turn of later Islamic theology. Yahya Michot, "L'avicennisation de la *sunna*, du ṣabéisme au leurre de la Ḥanīfiyya: À propos du Livre des religions et des sectes, II d'al-Shahrastânî," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 35 (1993): 113–20; Robert Wisnovsky, "One Aspect of the Avicennian Turn in Sunnī Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004): 65–100.
25 Historical context for the rise of college is offered in the following interdisciplinary volume: Joseph E. Lowry, Devin J. Stewart, and Shawkat M. Toorawa (eds.), *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of Professor George Makdisi* (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004). Tony Street has provided an overview of one of the most widely circulating later primers of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic that became a key text in scholarly education. Tony Street, "Logic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 247–65. Roy Mottahedeh's novel on mid-twentieth-century Iran offers an illustrative literary representation, albeit in an extremely different political and social context, of the way Aristotelian-Avicennan logical reasoning was taught by Imāmī Shiite scholars to the youth among scholarly families who were part of the fabric of local neighborhoods. In the parallel historical analysis that runs through the novel, Mottehedeh points to the historical background of this paradigm in what we know was the predominantly

Sunnī scholarly world of the medieval Middle East. Roy P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).

26 Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture*, pp. 1–24. Alexander Knysh's analysis of the scholarly response to philosophically oriented forms of Sufi metaphysics throughout the late medieval Islamic world offers examples illustrative of how theological doctrinal debates were not isolated monastic or bibliophile affairs. Rather, these debates were embedded into the social fabric of Middle Eastern and North African urban intellectual life. Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). A picture of the place of scholars in urban and rural social life emerges in the works of Vincent Cornell on North African Sufism. Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), pp. 3–31; idem, "Faqīh versus Faqīr in Marinid Morocco: Epistemological Dimensions of a Polemic," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested*, eds. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Brill: Leiden, 1999), 207–24.

27 The breadth of analysis in Daniel Gimaret's classic work on the Names of God in Islam is illustrative of the depth of the theoretical discussions and debates that emerged within medieval scholarly circles about scriptural concepts and precepts. These concepts include the scriptural reference to the importance of calling upon God by His Beautiful Names. Daniel Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam: Exégèse lexicographique et théologique* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2007).

28 Ibn Rushd pushed his argument very far in calling for a strict separation between a scholar's philosophical understanding of theology from the general populace's non-philosophical understanding. For him, al-Ghazālī was a theologian worthy of criticism because of the eclectic methods of al-Ghazālī's interest in philosophical theology and Sufism. Interestingly, Ibn Rushd's critique agreed with key aspects of Ibn Taymiyya's analysis of al-Ghazālī, even though Ibn Rushd and Ibn Taymiyya differed on the role of Aristotelian logic in Islamic theology. What follows are two interesting quotes from Ibn Rushd's discussion in which he criticizes the speculative theologians' mix of philosophical and theological methods: "Revelation must be affirmed on its manifest level and not be explained to the masses in a mix of [revelation] and philosophy, because [this mixed] explanation is an explanation of the results of philosophy for [the masses] without their having a proof for it." Ibn Rushd, *Kashf ʿan Manāhij al-Adilla fī ʿAqāʾid al-Milla*, ed. M. A. al-Jabrī (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1998), p. 154. In the *Decisive Criterion*, he describes al-Ghazālī as "a philosopher with the philosophers, an Ashʿarī with the Ashʿarīs, and a Sufi with the Sufis," whose use of the syllogism makes his work "more meritorious" than other theologians and Sufis. Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl Fī Mā Bayn al-Ḥikma wa-l-Sharīʿa min al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. M. Amara (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif), p. 51.

29 In the Shāfiʿī scholar Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) relatively late analysis of comparative positions in jurisprudence, he includes references to Muʿtazilī positions that appear to the modern reader as striking inclusions. While Muʿtazilī theology has been the subject of much research and

came to be an enduring part of later Shiism, Muʿtazilī jurisprudence is less commonly referenced among historians of early Sunnism, which makes al-Āmidī's inclusion of it in comparative jurisprudential positions illustrative of the extent to which Sunnī jurisprudence and theology was in flux. The disappearance of Ẓāhirī jurisprudence and theology from conceptions of Sunnī history is similarly striking. Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf Al-Dīn Al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991).

30 While Ibn Taymiyya did not dispute the inherent value of deductive reasoning and the syllogistic sciences, his criticisms of the applications of logic in Islamic theology reflect an argument that the philosophers themselves made – namely, that the separation of Aristotelian-Avicennan logic from Neoplatonic-Avicennan conclusions in psychology and cosmology can be difficult. Wael Hallaq has offered an analytical overview of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the logicians. Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. xlv–xlviiii.

31 Everett Rowson's study of the tenth-century philosophy of al-ʿĀmirī leaves readers with an understanding of the various ways in which early Graeco-Arabic philosophy intersected with Islamic theology in approaches that also engaged Sufism. al-ʿĀmirī's approach, like that of al-Kindī, is more eclectic than the more famous models of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīna. This analysis offers important context for a point made in the current study, which is that early scholars had a variety early philosophical models to draw on in the formation of a more philosophical theology and philosophically oriented mystical theology. Everett K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate: Al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-Amad ʿAlā l-Abad* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1988).

32 Peter Adamson compares John Philoponus and al-Kindi's respective arguments for the creation of the world *ex nihilo.* al-Kindi's arguments appear in various sections of his *Oneness* and *On First Philosophy*, available in edited form in *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-Falsafiyya*. Peter Adamson, *al-Kindī* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 75–98.

33 See Chapter 1, note 29.

34 In the discussion of Islamic theology, while the English word theology is normally used as a specific translation for speculative theology as distinct from philosophy (*falsafa*), Sufi works of metaphysics became increasingly theological and philosophical in the early centuries to a point that makes the modern English term mystical theology a useful description and synonym for Sufi metaphysics. The term Sufis themselves often used was wisdom (*ḥikma*), which was also used by the philosophers together with philosophy and which became a distinct science in the later curricula of the Ottoman academies where philosophical *ḥikma* was taught. Sufi writers of philosophically oriented works of Sufi metaphysics, even if they were scholars, did not describe their treatises as speculative theology or philosophy in a phenomenon illustrative of how these works were often not aimed at providing a comprehensive theory of metaphysics. Even with the use of Neoplatonic-Avicennan doctrines, the goal of Sufi metaphysicians in many cases appears to have been more closely oriented around a method, in ritual and thought, of bringing about

mystical experience and articulating that experience in writing. In this regard, it is unsurprising that the most famous philosophical Sufis contrasted their mystical method with that of the philosophers. In the case of the philosophically oriented Neoplatonic-Avicennan Sufi al-Suhrawardī, he explicitly distinguished himself from the Peripatetics, including the Baghdad Peripatetics among the philosophers, on the basis of methodology. He simultaneously celebrated Hermes as a more authoritative figure than Aristotle, and presented himself as a follower of Plato, but he criticized the Aristotelian-Avicennan approach of the Baghdad Peripatetics. Van Bladel offers useful context for the example of al-Suhrawardī. Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes*, pp. 222–6. Ibn Barrajān (d. 536/1141) discussed in Chapter 6 of the current study, similarly distinguished Sufi *ḥikma* from *falsafa*, and he may have drawn on early tenth-century examples seen in Chapter 1. Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931), a scholar and follower of Sahl al-Tustarī, distinguished between the philosophers and the sages (*ḥukamāʾ*).

35 The precise nature of al-Ghazālī's engagement with Graeco-Arabic philosophy in his theology as an Ashʿarī theologian and in his mysticism as a Sufi has been the subject of debate for several decades. The introduction of Chapter 3 examines a recent trend in emphasizing al-Ghazālī's engagement with Neoplatonic psychology and cosmology in both his theology and mysticism. The respective works of Michael Marmura and Richard Frank offer a useful starting point for examining the early positions in this debate. Michael Marmura, "al-Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtiṣād*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994): 279–315; Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter-Universitätsverlag, 1992). See also Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Ashʿarite Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004): 101–44; Alexander Treiger, "Monism and Monotheism in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9 (2007): 1–27.

36 The previously mentioned case of al-Fārābī's critique of al-Kindī as well as Ibn Rushd's critique of al-Ghazālī's eclecticism are relevant examples in this context. From the perspective of philosophically oriented Sufi critiques of *falsafa*, Ibn ʿArabī's comments on Ibn Rushd echo aspects of al-Suhrawardī's comments on the Peripatetics. See n. 38.

37 See n. 26.

38 Walbridge, "Suhrawardī and Illuminationism," pp. 201–23. Ziai, "The Illuminationist Tradition," pp. 465–96.

39 Dimitri Gutas has shown how Ibn Sīna's reference to a work on Eastern wisdom (*al-ḥikma al-mashriqiyya*) is in fact a reference to a work on Peripatetic philosophy, in contrast with the conclusions of earlier scholarship that argued for a Sufi side of Ibn Sīna's work based on this reference. Still, as Chapter 6 points out, Ibn Sīna did have at least some interest in what contemporary Sufis had to say, and the Almohad courtier Ibn Ṭufayl's deliberate mysticizing of Ibn Sīna's (Avicenna) corpus in his novel *Alive, Son of Awake* appears to have been motivated by an interest in this aspect of Ibn Sīna's work. Ibn Ṭufayl's representation of Ibn Sīna closely parallels the engagement of contemporary Platonizing Sufis with Ibn Sīna's writing on psychology and cosmology. Dimitri Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth

Century," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (2002): 5–15; idem, "Ibn Ṭufayl on Ibn Sīna's Eastern Philosophy," *Oriens* 34 (1994): 359–85.

40 See Chapter 1, n. 44.

41 Mahmoud Ayoub has contextualized some of these debates in a larger analysis of the various genres and approaches to Qur'an commentary that developed historically. Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 16–40.

42 The notion of esoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*), found in early Sunnism (especially Sufism) and early Shiism (especially Ismāʿīlism), implied a binary relationship between esoteric and exoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-ẓāhir*). According to early critics, one of the dangers of this binary was that a Sufi or Ismāʿīlī writer could erroneously associate scripturally ordained rituals and practices with the category of exoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) and, thus, conceive of the possibility of bypassing both textual meaning and prescribed ritual piety in the pursuit of this esoteric knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*). A further danger was that everything prohibited in moral and ritual practice could be understood as permissible, and that therefore the entire moral legal framework would be flouted. The concern over this erroneous release from one's moral and ritual obligations, or antinomianism (*ibāḥiyya*), became the subject of many discussions in later Islamic history about Sufis, whether Sunnī or Shiite, and Ismāʿīlīs. However, in reality, many of the most well-known medieval writers of both Sufi metaphysics and Ismāʿīlī theology were careful to emphasize the necessity and importance of the scripturally ordained moral and ritual obligations (*sharʿ*). For example, the dual importance of both exterior and interior meanings of scriptural text and understandings of ritual is fundamental to the Sufi writings of Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 536/1141), a contemporary of Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151) discussed in Chapter 5. Ibn al-ʿArīf's *Maḥāsin al-Majālis* is dedicated in part to a mystical understanding of additional interior meanings of ritual practices in order to understand the exterior with greater depth. Ibn al-ʿArīf, *Maḥāsin al-Majālis*, ed. Miguel Asín Palacios (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1933). Sufis such as al-Kharrāz were similarly critical of an approach to understanding esoteric knowledge that would sideline the jurisprudential sciences as a lesser exoteric knowledge. Ahmet Karamustafa has highlighted figures such as Ibn al-Jawzī who were nonetheless critical of the Sufi distinction between *ʿilm al-bāṭin* and *ʿilm al-ẓāhir*. Ibn al-Jawzī's criticism was based on these previously mentioned concerns about the preservation of the moral and legal framework, which were systematized by Islamic jurisprudence and informed ultimately by scripture. Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 158. Writing against *ibāḥiyya* approaches was often part of a polemical genre of writing. See Garden, *The First Islamic Reviver*, pp. 133–5.

43 The political intersection of Umayyad- and Abbasid-era forms of political culture with those of late antique Hellenistic and Persian political legitimacy is contextualized succinctly in the following two studies: Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 67–80; Hugh Kennedy, "From Polis to Medina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria," *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 3–27.

44 George Saliba and Dimitri Gutas have each contextualized this dream in respective analyses of the motivations in early Islamic history for the translation of philosophical and scientific works into Arabic. George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 1–26; Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th -10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 95–106.

45 Joel Kraemer's classic work on the Būyid era highlights how the theoretical friction of Imāmī Shiite military rule in a Sunnī caliphate was counterbalanced by an enduring arrangement that saw something of an alignment of interests between Sunnī and Imāmī Shiite authority in Iraq that together rivaled the rising authority of the Fatimid Ismāʿīlī caliphate. Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

46 Omid Safi has offered an analysis of the transition period within a larger study of changing political ideologies and structures of authority. Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

47 Chapter 3 of the current study offers an in-depth analysis of al-Ghazālī's representation of the theological underpinnings of the early Ismāʿīlī political movements (Fatimids, Nizārīs) in a court-commissioned text that he wrote as chief judge under the Abbasids. The respective works of Heinz Halm and Paul Walker on the Fatimids offer key starting points for considering how medieval critics of the Fatimids understood the rise of the Fatimid caliphate as not only a political challenge, but also an ideological one. Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and Its Sources* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

48 The respective works of Paul Walker and Farhad Daftary have traced how Ismāʿīlī writers increasingly integrated Neoplatonic doctrines into Ismāʿīlī theology beginning in at least the early tenth century. Paul Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismāʿīlī Falsafa of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 3–67; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 144–255.

49 Paul Walker, *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī: Ismāʿīlī Thought in the Age of al-Ḥakīm* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 25–30; idem, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, pp. 10–24; Farhad Daftary, *Ismāʿīlī Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies*, (New York: I. B. Tauris 2004), pp. 20–36; Wilfred Madelung, "Das Imamat in der fruhen ismailitischen Lehre," *Der Islam* 37 (1961): 43–135.

50 On the term *Ḥashīshiyya* and the etymology of the European term *assassins*, see Chapter 3, note 1.

51 Drawing on passages from both *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* and *Faḍāʾiḥ al-Bāṭiniyya*, Frank Griffel has pointed out that while the text was commissioned by the caliph's court, it may have drawn on an earlier Persian text that al-Ghazālī had previously written. Griffel, Frank Griffel, *al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 36ff.

52 al-Ghazālī's discussion of causality in the *Scandals of the Esotericists* synthesizes some of his most important criticisms of Graeco-Arabic cosmological doctrines found in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers.* Michael Marmura, "al-Ghazālī on Bodily Resurrection and Causality in the *Tahāfut* and *Iqtiṣād*," *Aligarh Journal of Islamic Thought* 2 (1989): 46–58; Blake D. Dutton, "Al-Ghazālī on Possibility and the Critique of Causality," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001): 23–46; Taneli Kukkonen, "Possible Worlds in the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa:* Al-Ghazālī on Creation and Contingency," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38 (2000): 470–502.

Conclusion

The story told in the six chapters of this book has traced the historical relationship between government and religion in the pre-modern Middle East and North Africa. At the heart of this story has been an elusive interplay of political and religious authority that involved rival ruling administrations as well as the wider scholarly networks (*ʿulamāʾ*) of Islam. Since the seventh century C.E., these groups have debated an enduring question that has been answered differently across time and geography: in the post-prophetic era, what constituted sound models of political leadership and communal guidance of the general faithful populace?

By bridging analysis of the judiciary with an investigation of widely circulating philosophical and theological writings, this study adds the following new perspective to the historical picture of how ruling circles and the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) answered this question: While the scholars indeed represented much of pre-modern Islamic religious authority through their semi-independent dominance of the judiciary and through their powerful social role as urban mediators and guides of faith and ethics, the way they conceived of their role as communal guides was significantly informed by their assessment of contemporary political models of leadership. That is, despite their dominance over ruling circles in the judiciary, the scholars' (*ʿulamāʾ*) textual articulations of what constituted sound theological knowledge and valid forms of communal guidance in belief and ethics reflected a keen awareness of the intellectual underpinnings of contemporary political movements, especially those movements they sought to distance themselves from. What is understated in the most recent research is this historical agency of political actors that impacted, often without intention, scholarly conceptions of sound theological knowledge and valid guidance and authority.

In the case study examined in this book, eleventh- and twelfth-century scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) active in the Andalusī Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba and Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad disapproved of the rival Fatimid caliphate in Cairo (r. 909 – 1171) and its controversial image

of the ruler as a semi-messianic (*mahdī*) and Platonic philosopher-governor endowed with a special intellect. The scholars' disapproval of the Fatimid caliph occurred despite their acceptance of the earlier Abbasid caliphs' own Hellenistic model of political culture, reflected in the politically backed translation of Greek, Aramaic, Pahlavi, and Sanskrit works of learning to Arabic beginning in the eighth century C.E. With the spread of proselytizing Fatimid theologians westward and eastward to al-Andalus and Iraq, the majority-Sunnī scholars' growing alarm over the Fatimid caliphate's political power deepened their self-scrutiny over the way some fellow scholars, such as the Cordovan Ibn Masarra (d. 331/931), played an additional role in their communities as philosophical sages (*ḥukamāʾ*). The once innocuous social and religious phenomenon of scholars as philosophical sages, guiding the spiritual and intellectual ascent of their followers, suddenly became a phenomenon that was politically and religiously contentious with the rise of the Platonizing Fatimid philosopher-caliphs and their itinerant supporters.

By the twelfth century, in an intellectual synthesis epitomized by al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) embrace of early Abbasid-era philosophical writings, and likewise foreshadowed by the philosophical reputations of his Sunnī predecessors Ibn Masarra (d. 331/931) and Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), the increasingly multifaceted scholars of the Middle East and North Africa largely came to the following conclusion about how to define their own role as guides of communal belief: On one level, as Sufi metaphysicians, the scholars could soundly assimilate early Neoplatonic-Avicennan doctrines on the ascent of the soul and intellect into the language they used to articulate and instruct mystical experience, and they could do so without sanctioning the specific theory of intellectual ascent used in later Fatimid political culture. On another level, as logicians, and as nuanced critics of various Platonizing Islamic theologies such as those of Ibn Masarra and the Fatimids, the scholars could soundly assimilate Aristotelian-Avicennan logic and its syllogistic tools into their knowledge of jurisprudence and theology without uncritically accepting the entirety of logic's Platonizing and seemingly dualist conclusions about the nature of the world and the human mind. That is, in a notable reflection of their political and geographical context, and in an expansion of their early social role, the increasingly polymathic scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) of the Middle East and North Africa after the twelfth century increasingly embraced two additional roles, often simultaneously: (1) the role of Neoplatonic-Avicennan Sufi metaphysicians, who were increasingly active in Sufi lodges (*zāwiya, tekke, khānqāh*) in the early modern period, and (2) the role of Aristotelian-Avicennan neo-Ashʿarī theologians, who were active in endowed colleges of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalām*). That

the nominalist critique of Plato's realism emerged in Arabic in this period in the writings of the Ẓāhirī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) and the Shāfiʿī scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), long before its wider transmission in Latin Europe, speaks to the extent that the modern border between Western and Middle Eastern historiographies overlooks a shared geographical and intellectual context dating back to the medieval world, and even further, to the world of late antiquity.

From the perspective of sources, this book has shed new light on this fluid interplay of political and religious authority by situating legal opinions and juridical institutions in the larger context of court chronicles, biographical dictionaries, mystical treatises, doxographical works, philosophical books, and theological treatises. When brought together with the history of scholarly legal opinions, these philosophical and theological sources add certain precision to the historian's picture of a dynamic interplay between the political authority of ruling circles and the religious authority of the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*). What this book suggests in place of modern allusions to a pre-modern scholarly "orthodoxy" or orthodoxies, then, is the identification of broad trends in the scholars' juridical practices and theological beliefs that were fluid and highly contextual according to geography, time period, and most significantly in this book, political culture.

In sum, the goal of this book has been to facilitate more sound analyses of the historical relationship between government and religion in the Middle East and North Africa. What this book offers future researchers is an illustration of a key investigative paradigm: Political and religious affairs in the Middle East and North Africa are not simply illustrative of enduring theories of communal leadership and sacred beliefs. Rather, the rapidly changing political and religious landscape of the region tells a much more complex story of how geography, geopolitics, local customs, and economics have impacted and continue to impact the way these theories and beliefs are put into practice.

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